

# AN UNBREAKABLE BOND

When actress Emma Stone's mom, Krista, was diagnosed with breast cancer, mother and daughter became closer than ever. Here, how they supported each other—and what they're doing to raise awareness of the disease. BY ELLEN BYRON



Emma Stone will never forget the phone conversation that changed her life. In October 2008, she called her mom, Krista, who happened to be on her way home from a mammogram appointment. When Krista heard Emma's voice, she burst into tears. "She had found a [breast] lump...and she needed a biopsy and was scared," recalls the 24-year-old actress, who has starred in *The Amazing Spider-Man*, *The Help* and *Crazy, Stupid, Love*. "For the first time in my life, I heard my mom cry out of fear."

Shortly afterward, Krista, then 48, was diagnosed with Stage II breast cancer. "Emma was unbelievably calming," she recalls. "In that moment, she became the parent and I became the child. It was special in a strange way."

Emma herself was surprised by her reaction. "I got pretty stoic, which is the opposite of how I usually react to things in life, being the Scarlett O'Hara type that I am," she says. "Hearing that your mother has been diagnosed with breast cancer is horrifying, but you have to focus on the person who's actually going through the experience and worry about how she's feeling more than how you're feeling."

## "A DIFFICULT, TERRIFYING TIME"

Krista vividly recalls the moment she realized something was wrong. She was putting sports drinks in the refrigerator and accidentally brushed up against one of her breasts. "I felt

some tenderness," she recalls. "I thought, *What is that?* I could even feel the lump through my bra. I was sort of perimenopausal, so I thought, *Oh, this is hormones.*" Krista called her gynecologist, who recommended a mammogram. It turned out she had triple negative breast cancer, an especially aggressive form of the disease.

Krista underwent a double mastectomy, then 25 weeks of chemotherapy. Afterward, she had radiation and participated in a clinical trial involving an experimental medication. Watching Krista fight for her life was "a really difficult, terrifying time," says Emma, her voice filled with emotion. "I wanted to latch onto her and never let go, to be by her side every minute, keeping her safe," Emma wrote in her mother's blog, *kristasbiggirlpanties.com*. "I [was] in New York shooting the most beautiful movie...but all I wanted was to be next to her in Arizona."

Krista wouldn't have it. "My greatest joy was to see everybody live their lives because it gave me a diversion," she says. "I said, 'If you don't do the film [*Paper Man*], I'm not going to do chemo. That's how strongly I feel. Please, go live your life—and call me and tell me all about it. It will help me through this because it will give me something to look forward to and something to talk about that isn't related to my health?'"

Emma's first day at work coincided with Krista's mastectomy, but she came home whenever she could. "She made it a priority," says Krista. "She was there for multiple treatments.



She couldn't be there for my final treatment, so we did it via Skype." During visits home, Emma tried to amuse Krista to lift her spirits. "I followed the philosophy I've had my whole life, which is make 'em laugh," Emma explains.

"Emma was a great distraction," recalls Krista. "She knew exactly what I needed. She would [tell me] great stories and sing and dance. We had wonderful heart-to-heart talks, too. We've always been extremely close." Indeed, Emma says, "I still haven't gone a day without speaking to her on the phone...she's my best friend, and I want her to know everything that's going on in my life. And I want to know everything that's going on in hers."

## RAISING AWARENESS

Luckily, Krista's aggressive treatment put her in remission. In October 2010, mother and daughter celebrated Krista's "first year clear" with matching tattoos of blackbird feet inspired by Krista's favorite song, "Blackbird." Singer-songwriter Sir Paul McCartney provided the tattoo art himself. "Emma had gotten to know

## EMMA'S EARLY-DETECTION TIPS

**1. Go with your gut.** When Emma's mom, Krista, felt a lump in her breast, she raced off to her doctor. "Thankfully, she had that gut instinct [that something was wrong]," says Emma. "A lot of people notice something is off and think, *Oh, it's all in my head, I don't need to get it checked out.*"

"My mom's tumor was not present at her annual mammogram, then nine months later she was already Stage II. Clearly, the tumor grew fast. It could have been a very different story if she'd waited three months for a mammogram."

**2. Find out what screenings you need.** "Early detection is the strongest ally you have," she says. It's also a cornerstone of Revlon's "Your Lips Can Save Lives" campaign. The earlier the diagnosis, the greater your odds for a positive outcome.

**3. Reduce your risk.** "We know what's been proven to cause cancer, like smoking," says Emma. Don't light up, and live healthfully.



Emma and Krista Stone stress the importance of early detection in their public service campaign.

Sir Paul and his wife, Nancy, who is also a triple negative breast cancer survivor," says Krista.

Krista finds the lyrics *Take these broken wings and learn to fly* especially meaningful in the context of her experience. "Any time you're facing your mortality, you're broken," she says somberly. "You have no control; you don't know what's going to happen; you're scared. So, through all of that trauma, you have to learn to fly again."

Today, Krista has been in remission for almost five years. "It's very exciting," says Emma, who is dedicated to raising awareness of breast cancer. She recently became a global brand ambassador for the cosmetics giant Revlon, which launched a public service campaign called "Your Lips Can Save Lives." The campaign emphasizes the need to talk to your loved ones about cancer, since early detection saves lives. Says Krista, "I think when a daughter reaches an age where she needs to be concerned about her breast health, a mother should

probably say, 'Let's be breast buddies or breast friends.' Mothers and daughters can encourage each other to do self-exams at the same time every month and check on each other."

In May, three generations of Stone women will participate in the Entertainment Industry Foundation/Revlon Run/Walk For Women in New York City. "We're celebrating my mother's 80th birthday, and she's the leader of the pack!" Krista laughs.

Emma is passionate about events like these. "When you're walking through Times Square [in New York City] and everyone is wearing pink and is completely dedicated to...raising funds in support of breast cancer research..." Emma pauses as she searches for the right words. "It's unbelievable."

Close as mother and daughter were before Krista's ordeal, they've emerged from the experience with an even greater sense of love and appreciation for each other. "It's obviously a terrible thing to go through," Emma says. "But if our story can help find a cure, then that's ultimately the positive side of a really scary thing." 📌

## KRISTA'S SURVIVAL TIPS

### 1 Share your health history.

Although Krista tested negative for both breast cancer genes, she doesn't want Emma taking any chances with her health. "I've encouraged Em to start earlier with mammograms," she says. "She may need to have a baseline test in her early 30s."

Even if you don't have a history of cancer, it pays to discuss health concerns with family members. "It could be as simple as, 'Hey, this is something I've noticed in myself. Why don't you get it checked out too?'" says Krista.

### 2 Laugh a little.

Krista's cancer battle taught her that emotional well-being is just as important as physical health. Mother and daughter took inspiration from their heroine, Gilda Radner, the comedienne who died from ovarian cancer at 41. "When Em was younger, I introduced her to Gilda [via DVD] because I was so enamored of her," says Krista. "Em became very enamored of her, too. She was so silly and brilliant. Despite her illness, she always kept her sense of humor. I admire that so very much." Both Emma and Krista are dedicated supporters of Gilda's Club, the cancer support community created in the comedienne's memory.

### 3 Be honest with loved ones.

When you're battling cancer, it's tempting to try to hide your negative emotions and pain from loved ones. But Krista learned that honesty is the best policy. "I promised Emma and my son, Spencer, that I would always tell them the truth so they wouldn't have to worry, *Is Mom really okay?*" says Krista. "If I was having a bad day, they knew it. If I was scared about something, they knew it. As hard as it was for me to do, I knew that that's what they needed to get through it. If I hadn't been honest with them, they wouldn't have believed me when I said I was okay."



TIPS FOR LIVING BETTER WITH CANCER



### CAN GARLIC HELP PROTECT AGAINST CANCER?

**Q** I've read that garlic has anti-cancer effects. Is this true?

**A** Research says yes! In several studies, people who reported high garlic intake had a lower risk of developing stomach and colon cancers than those with low intake. No one knows what the optimal daily dose is, but if you enjoy garlic try eating 2 to 4 grams (about one clove) daily. Keep in mind, garlic is not a cancer treatment.

—**John Hainsworth, MD,**  
Chief Scientific Officer,  
Sarah Cannon Research  
Institute, Nashville

### REGAINING BOWEL CONTROL

**Q** In addition to hair loss, fatigue and nausea, I've discovered a surprising side effect of chemotherapy: bowel incontinence. Why is this happening, and what can I do about it?

**A** Treatments like chemotherapy, radiation and surgery can affect the body's normal tissues. As a result, some people may experience unpleasant side effects. The good news: You can improve—if not cure—your incontinence. Treatment options include medication, a bowel-training program and surgery. Talk with your oncologist about the best option for you.

—**Kent Ulrich, MD,**  
Texas Oncology, Wichita Falls Texoma  
Cancer Center, and **Zehra Kapadia, MD,**  
Texas Oncology, Houston Willowbrook

### CAN I GET MY NAILS DONE DURING CHEMO?

**Q** I'm currently undergoing chemotherapy, but I'd like to pamper myself. Is it okay for me to get a manicure?

**A** It's important to stay positive during chemotherapy, so it's a great idea to pamper yourself once in a while. In some cases, however, manicures can be risky. Unsterile tools can puncture your skin and put you at risk for infection. That's dangerous if you have neutropenia—a low white blood cell count—which is a common side effect of chemo. Even minor infections can quickly become serious. If you decide to go ahead with a manicure, be sure the salon is well ventilated to avoid unhealthy fumes.

—**Marc B. Garnick, MD,**  
clinical professor of medicine,  
Harvard Medical School, Boston

### CHEMO PORT PAIN

**Q** I had a chemo port implanted into my chest and am having trouble getting comfortable at bedtime. The port feels like it's being pushed into my collarbone. How can I get some rest?

**A** Have you tried a heating pad? I'd recommend it! Also, try positioning your arm differently. Sometimes it takes several months to get used to a port. If you continue to experience discomfort, contact the surgeon who implanted it.

—**Gregory Masters, MD,** oncologist,  
Helen F. Graham Cancer Center,  
Newark, DE



GARLIC LOVERS MAY HAVE A LOWER RISK OF CANCER.